

Fact Sheet



California Department of Health Services | Cancer Detection Programs: Every Woman Counts

cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is nearly 100% preventable with regular Pap tests, which can detect abnormalities before they become cancerous.^{1,2}

The Good...

- The Pap test, one of the most successful cancer screening tests, has saved thousands of lives since first introduced in the 1950s.³
- Fewer California women are getting cervical cancer. From 1988–1999, invasive cervical cancer incidence declined in each of the four major race/ethnic groups.⁴

The Bad...

- This year, 13,000 cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S., and 4,100 women will die from the disease.⁵
- In California, approximately 1,735 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year and 470 women will die needlessly from the disease.¹
- Uninsured women are less likely than insured women to be screened, making them most at risk to develop cervical cancer. The risk of developing cervical cancer is 3 – 10 times greater in women who have not been screened.^{6,7}
- Uninsured patients are more likely to die prematurely because of delayed diagnosis.⁷
- A common cancer among Asian and Hispanic women, cervical cancer is a major problem for many women recently immigrating to California.¹

...And The Not So Pretty

- Between 60% and 80% of American women with newly diagnosed invasive cervical cancer have either not had a Pap test in the past 5 years or have never had one.⁸
- 800,000 California women age 18 and older who need to be routinely screened have never had a Pap test.²

Age, Income, Health Insurance Status Trends & Patterns

- The average age of women diagnosed with the disease is between 50 and 55 years old – primarily because they are less likely to have routine exams.³
- About one out of five uninsured, low-income women age 40 and older screened by the Cancer Detection Section (CDS) have never or rarely (within the last 5 years) received a Pap test. This is the group where over 30% of invasive cervical cancers will be diagnosed.⁹

- Approximately one out of every six uninsured women have never had a Pap test, compared to only one out of every seventeen women with health insurance.²
- Cervical cancer screening is increasing among lower income women. In 1999, 84% of lower income women reported having a Pap test in the last three years, compared to 76% in 1992.²

Ethnic Trends & Patterns

The risks of developing and dying from cervical cancer differ among ethnic groups, as does the frequency of getting regular cervical cancer screening.

White (Non-Hispanic)

- Half (52%) of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 1998 in White women were in the early stages.¹
- From 1988-1999, cervical cancer incidence declined less among White women in California compared to other ethnic groups – the average decrease per year was 2%.⁴
- In 2000, 87% of White women ages 18 and older in California had a Pap test in the last three years.¹

African-American

- Less than half (42%) of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 1998 were in the early stages.¹
- From 1988-1999, the average decrease per year in cervical cancer incidence was 4.2%. Most of the decrease has taken place since 1992.⁴
- In 2000, 90% of African-American women ages 18 and older in California had a Pap test in the last three years.¹

Asian/Pacific Islander

- Asian/Pacific Islander women have the second highest risk for developing cervical cancer.^{1,4}
- 58% of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 1998 in Asian/Pacific Islander women were in the early stages.⁴
- From 1988-1999, the average decrease per year in cervical cancer incidence was 3.5%.⁴
- Asian/Pacific Islander women were the least likely to report having recently received a Pap test.² In 2000, 78% of the women ages 18 and older in California had a Pap test in the last three years.¹
- The cervical cancer incidence rate in Vietnamese American women is five times higher than among White women, according to national statistics. It is the most common cancer for Vietnamese women whereas breast cancer is the most common cancer for all other groups.¹⁰

Hispanic/Latinas

- Latinas have the highest risk for developing cervical cancer in California – more than twice as high as White women. Latinas represent one-third of invasive cervical cancers diagnosed each year in California.⁴
- Half (52%) of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 1998 among Latinas were in the early stages.¹
- In 2000, 83% of Latinas ages 18 and older in California had a Pap test in the last three years.¹

Early Detection - The Best Defense

- Regular Pap tests, which detect abnormalities before they become cancerous, are essential in preventing cervical cancer.¹
- Early detection of cervical cancer improves the chances of survival. When cervical cancer is localized (early stage), 91 of every 100 women will survive for at least five years. Once the cancer has spread to other parts of the body, the 5-year survival rate is 23%.¹
- All women should receive annual Pap tests beginning at age 18, or when they become sexually active, whichever comes first. After a woman has had 3 or more consecutive normal annual examinations, the Pap test may be performed less frequently at the discretion of the physician.¹

Sources:

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